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ABSTRACT

This document reports on the 11th seminar of the State Education and Environment Roundtable (SEER). It consists of brief overviews of the daily discussions and presentations that were made at the seminar. Topics discussed include potential partnerships with national language arts organizations and associations, how environmental justice issues relate to student achievement, and SEER's program evaluation framework. (MM)

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State Education & Environment Roundtable

ED 462 267

Eleventh SEER Seminar

May 20 , 2001
through
May 24, 2001

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State Education & Environment Roundtable

REPORT OF THE 11TH SEMINAR

INTRODUCTION

From May 20 through May 24, 2001 the State Education and Environment Roundtable (SEER) held its eleventh seminar in Des Moines, Iowa.

This document reports on the agenda and participants, briefly describes the various explorations and relates the discussions that characterized the Seminar.

Carol Hanley, of the Kentucky Department of Education, joined the meeting as SEER's newest state representative. In addition to Minnesota's SEER member Jean Tushie, Ms. Sue Wiley and Ms. Annette Drewes of the Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance joined the group of participants. Tanya Oznowich of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection represented New Jersey in Arthur Mitchell's absence. Leslie Dubey of the National Park Service represented Texas in Irene Pickhardt's absence. Patricia Vathis, Pennsylvania Department of Education, and Tony Angell of Washington's Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction were not able to attend.

SEMINAR AGENDA

The eleventh seminar focused on discussion of the following topics:

- Potential partnerships with national Language Arts organizations and associations;
- How Environmental Justice issues relate to student achievement;
- Progress in NEETF's Education and Environment Partnership;
- Developing statewide strategies for environment-based learning;
- SEER's Program Evaluation Framework;
- Issues related to funding environment-based programs; and,
- Review of Washington State's Assessment Benchmarks.

The full Seminar Agenda is included as Appendix A.

The list of participants is included as Appendix B.

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Daily Discussions and Presentations

State Updates

Throughout the week, SEER member state representatives shared updates on advancements and ongoing program development within their states. The state updates also contained descriptions of activities such as: funding and grants; impacts of SEER research on state reform efforts; standards and frameworks and curriculum development.

Sunday, May 20, 2001

Field trip to Natural Areas

The opening session included visits to a native prairie and a National Wildlife Refuge.

Monday, May 21, 2001

Introduction to Eleventh Seminar

Dr. Lieberman began the meeting with introductions of all SEER members and guests. Opening comments included a review of the week's agenda and a description of the notebook contents.

The discussions began by exploring how environment-based education connects with goals in the field of language arts.

Language Arts and Environment-based Education

An introduction to critical issues in Language Arts was presented by Michelle Goady, Language Development Section Chief, Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Ms. Goady outlined the factors that led to the development of reading design principles in the state.

Because the reading gains statewide were lower that desired, MSDE began exploring ways to improve reading throughout the state. They put together a task force whose recommendations formed the foundation of the design principles.

MSDE areas of focus include:

- designing guidelines for teachers to select reading materials that are true to content;
- providing high quality teacher training;
- emphasizing that all teachers are teachers of reading;
- remembering that older students still need reading instruction;
- reading is not decoding, or reading fiction, it is gaining meaning from content;
- recognizing that students need to learn to construct understanding;
- having a foundation in content standards, to determine what students need to know and be able to do;
- emphasizing interdisciplinary practices; and,
- addressing needs early, before students are two years behind grade level.

Ms. Goady shared the Reading Design Principles developed by their task force. These principles constitute the criteria to be used in all of Maryland's public schools. The principles include:

- Teacher knowledge and planning
- Word recognition instruction
- Early intervention and prevention
- Balanced instruction
- Reading and writing to learn
- Self-directed reading
- Collaboration for learning
- School-wide coordination
- Instructional and learning time
- Ongoing assessment
- Classroom collections and media centers
- Home, family and community connections

In Maryland another effort formed a consortium—the Center for Reading Excellence—linking Johns Hopkins, the Kennedy Kreiger Institute and MSDE. The group is conducting research on struggling readers to determine why the students' performance is low.

The center has instituted a middle school reading program in Baltimore City Schools. They have brought in mentor liaisons to work with teachers who have little skill in teaching reading or who are not prepared to teach the student population of inner city schools.

MSDE has also developed the Family Reading Plan, a collaboration between home and school. The program offers suggested grade-level activities. More information can be gained by accessing their website (http://www.ed.gov/pubs/CompactforReading/)

Micheal Thompson, Language Arts specialist from the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, discussed writing and secondary literature. Mr. Thompson began by posing several questions to the group:

- "How can we help students gain science and environment textual intelligence within a content area?"
- As a teacher, "How can you help yourself enjoy teaching and help your students gain contextual understanding?"
- "What does it mean to read in science or social studies, etc.?"
- "What are the best practices for writing?"

Mr. Thompson discussed the concept of strategic reading within content areas. He suggested a book by Jim Burk entitled "Reading Reminders." Teachers are asking for models on how to teach reading and writing skills that still allow them to be true to the subject matter areas.

Citing the work of George Hillocks of the University of Chicago, Mr. Thompson discussed issues surrounding the narrowing of curriculum choices because of the push for subject matter standards and the pressure put on schools to succeed. There is a need to stop moving from one new program to the next. Educators need to stay with one innovation and use the same best practices over time.

There is a needs to have language arts put into a local context to better engage students in their learning. This local context can provide a window to a broader view. Students want to learn about real life right now. Nancy Atwell's "In the Middle" focuses on the concept that school is life.

Mr. Thompson shared a design principle based on the 3R's: room and time; response; and, responsibility. Teachers need more room and time to write within their instructional periods. Writers need response from different audiences including peers, community members and parents. Given ownership of their writing, students take even more responsibility for their work.

Educators need to incorporate psycho-linguistic practices to help students understand what they're doing while they're reading. Students need to spend less time simply decoding and more time gaining meaning from the text. "Reading is an interactive sport!" Teachers must put more conscious decision-making into selecting texts by assessing justifications for their selection, building rationale for why they choose their materials. The literature selected should be accessible to everyone, allowing access to big ideas we want students to be considering.

Kent Ryan, language arts consultant to the Iowa Department of Education, presented his thoughts on the following issues:

- The need for educators to explore teaching topically vs. contextually.
- There is no need for more research. Educators already know enough to make a difference. The issue is whether or not we are willing to do the hard work to make the necessary changes.
- The same strategies that help low-level students can help all students. Katherine Snow combined good quality instruction with students from different backgrounds and observed benefits to all student groups.
- The focus should be on school work, not student work or the work of an individual teacher.
- School improvement needs to concentrate on a few select innovations.
- Data on implementation practices, not only student test scores, need to be carefully assessed.
- Professional development should begin with a proven research base, The strategy should be proven over time with different student populations and demonstrate expectations of learner behavior.
- In a workshop setting, participants need 15-20 demonstrations of the model and 15-20 opportunities to practice it.
- Experts need to gather feedback from the learners. This form of evaluation should dictate the direction of the professional development. No time should be spent in verbal corrective feedback by the expert.
- Peer coaching should be the key ingredient of teachers' planning lessons, which is the continuing learning of the new strategy.
- Expert coaches should be in the school periodically to collect feedback and use it to improve the program.

Attention should be given to the research-based practices that will result in student achievement gains. The key steps of this model are:

- Read aloud. Teachers should model reading short passages aloud, to demonstrate fluency and phrasing.
- Talk aloud. The teacher does the talking, reviewing connection between reader and writer. The teacher should point out text structures like comparing and contrasting.
- Think aloud. The teacher thinks out loud about the passage, modeling processes a reader brings to text or text structures, how one comprehends the explicit instruction-cycle of lessons.
- Use the picture/word inductive model. The teacher begins with a picture, using oral language to point out what they see. Teachers then post their words to provide a springboard for further vocabulary generated by the students.

Closing discussions involved identifying the need for: training non-formal environmental educators in sound instructional practices for reading and writing; model units connecting reading and writing to environment-based content; a possible SEER-generated book on the effects of environment-based learning on language arts achievement; incorporating tools such as NWREL's rubrics in assessing students literary understanding; sample rubrics on assessing examples of student work; and, capacity building for non-formals.

The language arts session concluded with a discussion about the need for development of a national environment-based literature list. It was recommended that this database be skills-based and electronically searchable. The list should be searchable by grade level, reading skill and topic (e.g , watersheds, air quality, etc). It was also suggested that the database be stringently reviewed by reading specialists and should involve input from library media centers, the American Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of Reading. Other possible partners included Eisenhower, the American Reading Association, NCTE, NWREL, National Reads Day and the National Writing Project.

Environmental Justice

Gary Heath introduced the afternoon session on environmental justice. He pointed out the increasing evidence tying significant absences of low performing students to poor air quality. Lead paint poisoning is also believed to be a determining factor in neurological problems related to city–dwelling students.

Mr. Heath emphasized the need to explore the impact that environmental justice issues are having on the educational performance of the nation's children, particularly in urban areas.

Althea Moses, Environmental Justice Program Manager for Region 7 of the U.S. EPA, began by defining environmental justice as the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on disadvantaged populations and communities, such as low-income minority neighborhoods. Environmental justice is an outgrowth of the civil rights movement, with a goal of providing equal protection under the law. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act states that no recipient of federal funds can discriminate on the basis of economics or ethnicity.

In one study, four of five polluted sites were centered in African American communities, prompting the need to examine the correlation between race and waste. Ms. Moses also discussed the need to examine the correlation of learning disabilities in older children with exposure to environmental hazards.

The EPA has made available a toxic release inventory (TRI) that is a searchable database, accessed by zip code. The TRI serves to: alert residents as to the types of toxic chemicals permitted in their neighborhood; provide an inventory of harmful chemicals in the community; and, delineates the potential impacts of those chemicals on the residents. Other services include helping communities design emergency response plans and educating the public about how to interpret the posted "hazardous diamonds."

One of the EPA's primary goals is to equip the public with knowledge, making the environmental connection to health and to get attention from broader audiences. Work needs to focus on relating the relevance of environment, giving the public a voice to affect greater involvement.

Student involvement can take the shape of creating spatial models and maps, conducting research, putting into practice the scientific method, incorporating civil rights and historical perspectives, and integrating chemistry and other sciences.

Partnership opportunities also must be explored. We must examine how training focused on environmental justice concerns, such as the connection between asthma and air quality, can be included in professional development of groups not traditionally related to those issues.

Issues were discussed by the group relating to the relationship between the lowest performing schools and local environmental issues. The dialogue included the following key points:

- More research needs to be conducted to assess the connection between the low performing students and local environmental issues;
- Cultural sensitivity must be considered—every community consists of members who are specialists about that community; and
- The need to examine how to best approach communities to build allies.

NEETF's Education and Environment Partnership

Mr. Andy Finch, of the National Environmental Education & Training Foundation (NEETF), gave the group an update on the status of the Education and Environment Partnership (EEP).

Mr. Finch discussed the need to have the various stakeholders agree on common language and to develop a common "sound bite." These stakeholder groups—formal education, informal education, environmental organizations, business community, public health, etc.—all should be delivering a common message.

Mr. Finch reminded the participants that the EEP will be solely focused on policy. There is a strong need for SEER and others to reinforce the effort.

Tuesday, May 22, 2001

An Iowa state-level advisory council working on developing an environment-based state strategy joined SEER's members for the morning session. The team included: Johanna Woelfel, Iowa Dept. of Economic Development; Ross Harrison, Information and Education Bureau, Iowa Dept. of Natural Resources; and, Steve Quirk, Iowa Dept. of Public Health; Judy Levings, Iowa State University.

The session focused on sharing the work being done in other SEER states to develop state strategies and form state-based EIC networks. Discussion topics included the following issues and strategies:

- Structuring an interagency council to act as an information sharing body;
- Forming a multi-agency team looking for commonalities in needs, such as developing demonstration schools;
- Developing a partnership network involving stakeholders such as business leaders, universities, tourism, EE associations and state environmental commissions;
- Convening an EE summit to coordinate efforts;
- Creating a clearinghouse for materials
- Developing a strategic plan for how to use financial resources as well as coordinating efforts;
- Learning from demonstrated models—consider partners, funding, legislative support, political involvement;
- Involving important categories of stakeholders that might be overlooked such as PTA, school board association and business leaders;
- Building relationships to nurture legislature and capitalize on existing relationships;

- Forming a task force steering committee to educate high-level state councils;
- Compiling research on reform-based programs to use as basis to inform group to implement the plan;
- Define guidelines for best practices;
- Identifying stakeholders—beneficiaries, educators and supporters—to assist in plan;
- Facilitate EIC implementation effort throughout the state;
- Writing guidelines for various audiences;
- Inviting legislators to environment-based events, finding the champions in your stakeholder groups and singling them out;
- Aligning with state education association (e.g., science teacher associations, teachers of reading, etc.)
- Thinking like you're managing the board of a non-profit—go after two new board members a year from outside the "average" groups; and,
- Making connection to reform efforts, how effort will address problems, issues that the other groups have identified.

The session closed with Dr. Lieberman and Mr. Andrews sharing a description of the process California is using to formulate its state plan, which has thus far involved over 700 people. The steps in the process include:

1. Invitation from the Superintendent of Public Instruction to attend an Environmental Education Summit.
2. Formation of a task force steering committee.
3. Development of an action strategy outline to support statewide networks.
4. Dissemination of information to 300,000 teachers to begin a regional coordinators' network.
5. Coordinating 11 regional listening sessions to ask the regional coordinators, "How should the state office increase the quality and quantity of EE in state?"
6. Identifying leadership network members.
7. Insuring in-kind volunteer work to support the effort.
8. Chief of EPA made invitation for 12th session with senate, assembly and 50 state agencies. State EPA agencies heard that EE needed to be part of their strategic plans. Shared plan structure, guiding principles and key strategies.

Site Visit to Chariton Middle School

For the afternoon session, participants visited Chariton Middle School. Chariton is one of the original study schools included in the report *Closing the Achievement Gap* and featured in SEER's video *Beyond Walls, Across Disciplines*. The group interacted with two classes of students and had a debriefing session with teacher Lowell Wiele.

Wednesday, May 22, 2001

SEER's Program Evaluation Framework

Grace Lieberman and Linda Hoody presented an overview of SEER's program evaluation framework.

SEER has designed a series of instruments that allow educators and evaluators to conduct both formative and summative evaluations of the progress toward implementing the EIC model.

This system of program evaluation is based on the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) developed by the University of Texas at Austin and the Southwest Regional Education Development Laboratory. CBAM is a conceptual framework that describes, explains and predicts probable teacher/user/participant behavior in the change process. The model is intended to measure the adoption of an innovation by educators and includes a set of tools for measuring the implementation of an innovation.

SEER's evaluation framework allows the participants to assess their understanding of the EIC model; identify their concerns about the EIC implementation process; evaluate and monitor their progress toward implementation; and, measure the extent to which the school team has developed leadership and community support.

SEER's Evaluation Framework includes three key components:

- Two sets of Self-evaluation Rubrics (Implementing and Strengthening an EIC Program in Your School and Developing Leadership and Community to Support an EIC Program in Your School)
- Stages of Concern Questionnaire; and,
- Innovation Configuration Instrument (IC).

Ms. Hoody and Ms. Lieberman shared the framework components with the participants and discussed how these tools are currently being used to evaluate EIC implementation in SEER's state-based networks.

Funding Environment-based Programs

Dianne Hennes, of HBH Associates, led the afternoon session on developing funding sources for environment-based programs. Ms. Hennes discussed grantseeking built on relationships and led participants in several interactive exercises.

Some of the key points of Ms. Hennes' presentation included:

- Grant seeking and philanthropy are based on relationships;
- Charitable contributions in 1999 totaled 190.16 billion—over 75% were from individual contributions;
- Big-gift fundraising is dependent on information gathering and relationship building—the higher the gift, the more one invests in the types of activities that build relationships and the more essential it is to gather appropriate information;
- Consider how to develop your constituency—consider the organization's universe, people with similar interests and former participants;
- Investigate tools for grantseeking such as the Foundation Center (www.fdncenter.org);
- Establish a case for supporting EIC locally and nationally—develop your prospectus;
- Establish public/private partnerships; and,
- How to ask for charitable gifts—the most effective solicitation method being a personal visit by a team of two informed and committed volunteers who know the prospect.

Thursday, May 24, 2001

Student Assessment

The first session addressed student assessment projects throughout SEER's member states. Several years ago, a subcommittee of SEER members initiated the student assessment work. The subcommittee began by asking, "What do we want to assess?" and "What do

students need to know and be able to do related to systems and their interrelationships?" This initial work resulted in several state programs, including the Scope and Sequence model developed in Minnesota and Washington state's student assessment project.

The Washington state team asked SEER's state representatives to give them feedback on their high school benchmark performances. The team in Washington is in the final stages of several drafts for elementary and middle school benchmarks. Various working groups joined together to develop these assessment guidelines. In the next few months revisions and field testing will take place.

Planning for the 12th SEER Seminar

Plans for the twelfth SEER seminar were discussed. The dates and location are yet to be determined.

Ideas for the twelfth seminar included:

- Presentation on EE trends in Washington, D.C.;
- More effectively influencing administrators in colleges of education;
- Exploring a deeper connection to the field of service learning;
- SEER's role in exploring new territory—improving EIC delivery;
- Presentations by members of the "EIC family" (e.g., department-level, practitioners, superintendents, community members, administrators, parents, students, resource agencies and teachers). Having practitioners and partners share how they are succeeding in the EIC implementation process;
- Exploration of the role of technology and GIS, perhaps including student demonstration projects;
- More focused look at literacy and the connection between EIC and language arts;
- Building new partnerships (IOSHI, etc.); and,
- Finding additional researchers.

The 11th SEER Seminar closed.

State Education & Environment Roundtable

Appendix A

Eleventh SEER Seminar — Agenda

May 19 — May 24, 2001

Saturday - May 19, 2001	
Various	**Hotel Fort Des Moines** 1000 Walnut Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50309 Phone: (515) 243-1161 Fax: (515) 243-4317 Dinner: Independent, at hotel or nearby restaurant

Sunday - May 20, 2001	
7:30 a.m.	**Breakfast:** Hotel Fort Des Moines
8:00 a.m.	**Depart hotel for trip to explore Iowa's prairies, National Wildlife Refuge and cultural centers**
5:30 p.m.	Opening dinner
8:30	Return to Hotel Fort Des Moines

Monday – May 21, 2001	
8:00 a.m.	**Breakfast:** Hotel Fort Des Moines
9:00	**Greetings and opening comments**
9:15	**Exploratory:** Session with Language Arts specialists from Iowa, Maryland and Minnesota • Discussion of "state of the art" in Language Arts • Exploration of partnership opportunities
10:30	Break
10:45	**Exploratory:** (continued)
12:00 p.m.	Lunch: Hotel Fort Des Moines
1:00	**Exploratory:** Environmental Justice — possible relation to language arts achievement. • Althea Moses, U.S. EPA Region 7, Environmental Justice Program Manager
2:45	Break
3:00	**Exploratory:** Environmental Justice (continued)
4:00 - 4:30	**The Education and Environment Partnership** • Andy Finch, NEETF
4:30 - 5:00	**State Reports:** California and Maryland
5:00	Adjourn Independent dinner at local restaurants

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Tuesday - May 22, 2001	
8:00 a.m.	Breakfast: Hotel Fort Des Moines
8:30	**Update on State-based School Networks**
9:00	**Exploratory:** Developing statewide strategies
10:15	Break
10:30	**Exploratory:** Developing statewide strategies (continued)
11:00	**Depart for School Site Visit to Chariton Middle School** (lunch enroute)
12:30 p.m.	**Arrive at Chariton Middle School**
12:30	**Observe Chariton Middle School students and interdisciplinary team in action**
3:00	**Debrief site visit with teaching team**
4:00	Depart for return to Des Moines
5:30	Dinner at surprise location
8:30	Return to Hotel Fort Des Moines

Wednesday - May 23, 2001	
8:00 a.m.	Breakfast: Hotel Fort Des Moines
8:30 - 10:30	**Exploratory:** SEER's Innovation Configuration Instrument
10:30	Break
10:45 -12 p.m.	**State Updates:** Colorado, Florida, Minnesota, Iowa and Kentucky
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch: Big Daddy's BBQ at the park
1:00 - 1:45	**State Updates:** New Jersey, Ohio and Texas
1:45 - 3:00	**Exploratory:** Funding Environment-based Programs • Dianne Hennes, HBH Associates
3:00	Break
3:15 - 5:00	**Exploratory:** Review of Washington Assessment Benchmarks
5:30	Depart for Closing Dinner
8:00	Return to Hotel Fort Des Moines

Thursday - May 24, 2001	
8:00 a.m.	Breakfast: Hotel Fort Des Moines
8:30 – 9:00	**Discussion of SEER's Phase Three**
9:00 – 9:30	**Planning for 12th Seminar and**
9:30 – 10:15	**Administrative Matters and Seminar Evaluation**
11:00	Close of 11th Seminar Depart for Airport

Appendix B

11th Roundtable Seminar

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